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ABSTRACT

Research shows that small schools and schools within schools can yield positive outcomes for students and improved satisfaction and effectiveness among school staff. Small schools can be less costly than larger ones if judged by expenditure per graduate instead of cost per pupil enrolled. Examination of the policy environments of urban schools in six cities that have experimented with small schools and schools within schools reconfirms an often-made observation: successful, enduring change and reform in schools requires change and reform at the system level. Suggestions for improving policy environments of small urban schools and schools within schools include standardizing policies that accommodate and support small schools and schools within schools, installing actively supportive leaders and structures, and negotiating with unions to ensure that staffing decisions benefit the goals and structure of the school. Schools should receive assistance in identifying and applying research to support restructuring efforts. New demands for school accountability should be met in proactive ways. The role of principals should be rethought to allow for shared governance in schools within schools. Opportunities for professional development and collaboration should be provided. Efforts to downsize schools in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Kauai (Hawaii), and Portland (Oregon) illustrate six different approaches to downsizing schools. (TD)

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Easing the Policy Environments of Small Schools and Schools-within-Schools

Lessons from Six Cities

Based on the book *Not So Easy Going* by Mary Anne Raywid and Gil Schmerler

Researchers have amassed compelling evidence that smaller schools offer students many social and emotional advantages and can enhance student achievement, especially among poor and minority children. Many urban schools, hoping to replicate these results, are creating smaller schools and schools-within-schools. A growing number of success stories from these downsized urban schools have received national attention. Yet for many of them, the going has not been easy. What is lacking within the educational system is the right combination of effective structures and policies supporting the innovative practices that help these schools succeed.

This Policy Brief overviews major research findings on small schools and schools-within-schools and describes six models used to downsize schools in Boston, Chicago, Kapaa (HI), New York City, Philadelphia, and Portland (OR). It also notes advantages and challenges for each model, identifies lessons learned, and recommends actions policymakers and administrators can take to support innovation and success in small urban schools and schools-within-schools.

What Research Suggests about School Size

Research shows that small schools can yield positive outcomes for students and improved satisfaction and effectiveness among school staff. Contrary to common perception, it appears that small schools can be less costly than larger ones if assessed as to "expenditure per graduate" instead of "costs per pupil enrolled." In fact, cost analysis from the report *Dollars & Sense: The Cost Effectiveness of Small Schools* shows that, given the parameter that a "reasonably sized school" is the norm, construction costs per student across a variety of variables is lower for

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small school

There is not consensus on the "ideal" school size, and "small schools" are defined variously within the literature on school size. Generally schools with fewer than 400 students are regarded as "small." Research suggests that, to maximize student learning and success, enrollment should be limited to about 400 students in elementary schools and 800 in secondary schools, with some experts saying no school should serve more than 500 students.[1]

school-within-a-school

A school-within-a-school is formed when a large school divides into smaller subunits or hosts a smaller subunit. Individual subunits are commonly organized around a theme and include multiple grade levels. The school-within-a-school must negotiate the use of common space (gym, auditorium, playground) with the host school, but it is separate and autonomous with respect to budget and programs. Teachers and students are usually associated with the school-within-a-school by choice.

Beyond these elements, the literature on school downsizing has been inconsistent in its descriptions of how large schools are divided into subunits. For example, career academies, magnet schools, and "houses" (which assign students to smaller learning communities but remain closely associated with the larger school) are sometimes referred to as schools-within-schools, but these strategies are differentiated according to autonomy and focus by the U.S. Department of Education's Smaller Learning Communities Program.[2]

smaller schools than those approaching the "reasonably sized school limit." (This report defines "reasonably sized school" as having the following numbers of students: a maximum of 1,000 students for a high school, 750 students for a middle school, and 500 students for an elementary school.) See Table 1 for a breakdown.[3]

Evidence suggests that by creating schools-within-schools, large urban districts can reduce the "experienced" size of large schools and see results similar to those documented in the research literature on small schools—a logical assumption, but one that researchers are just beginning to examine. As pointed out in a recent summary of the research literature, "It is difficult to disentangle the effects of school size from other equally important factors such as student demographics, school resources and climate, and curricular strategies and reform. . . . The findings of all of the small schools research, at this point, are more suggestive than definite about possible outcomes of . . . restructuring [to create smaller learning communities]." Districts establishing schools-within-schools can, however, point to several substantial studies on schools-within-schools indicating that such arrangements yield positive academic, behavioral, and attitudinal outcomes.[4]

Policy Challenges Facing Small Schools and Schools-within-Schools

Spurred in part by recommendations from the National Association of Secondary School Principals in its groundbreaking 1996 report *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, several federal and private initiatives have been launched to downsize schools. Supporting these efforts is a growing body of knowledge on transforming large high schools or elementary schools into smaller units. But very little has been written about what policies are needed to permit small schools and schools-within-schools to succeed. What kinds of external conditions, controls, and supports are essential to sustaining these new schools?[5]

The answers must be sought in two places: the organizational structures into which they are placed and the policy environments with which they are surrounded. As different cities have sought to downsize their schools, reform leaders have tended to address one or the other but rarely both. Examination of the different models used to downsize schools in six cities—Boston, Chicago, Kapaa (HI), New York City, Philadelphia, and Portland (OR)—shows that each model for creating smaller schools or schools-within-schools comes with advantages and challenges of its own (see pp. 6-7). Each model encountered bureaucratic systems and regulations that made even good-faith efforts difficult to execute.

Policy challenges facing small schools. Rules, regulations, and procedures written for traditional institutions do not always fit small schools. These schools pose a real challenge to school districts, and vice versa. As Judith Rizzo, former deputy

Table 1
Comparison of Construction Costs Per Student in Smaller and Larger Schools

variable	size category	mean	difference
cost/student	smaller half larger half	$16,283.86 $17,618.40	-$1,334.54
cost/square foot	smaller half larger half	$104.64 $119.91	-$15.26
designed capacity	smaller half larger half	414.68 610.92	196.24
students/grade (size)	smaller half larger half	99.66 169.85	-70.19
square feet/student	smaller half larger half	150.63 161.18	-10.55
number of grades	smaller half larger half	5.14 4.29	+0.85

Note: The information presented here is based on an analysis of 145 "reasonably sized" school facility designs submitted to various design competitions between 1990 and 2001.

chancellor of New York City Schools, put it:

> We are convinced that small schools cannot flourish on the margins of the system; they need to be an integral part of it. Nor can the system flourish if it can accommodate only one organizational model, if it discourages change, or if it inhibits innovation, whether by design or by a failure to adapt.[6]

Despite such a bold stance on the part of school districts in New York and elsewhere, the standard approach to dealing with difficulties imposed by rules that don't fit has been to exercise *policy by exception*, as noted several years ago by Linda Darling-Hammond and Jacqueline Ancess. Instead of seeking new and different policies to govern the new schools, there has been a tendency simply to use waivers and exemptions to existing policy. Applying for these waivers and exemptions can, however, consume a great deal of time and energy on the part of the small school. It can also produce the unintended outcome of blocking "lessons learned" in small schools from affecting the school system and its policies in general.[7]

A district's refusal to write more flexible policies (or, failing that, to make exemptions) can make it difficult for small schools to accomplish their mission. For instance, one New York City regulation required all city high schools to schedule their students by computer, negating the individualization that many small schools see as their central "reason for being." Yet, it proved impossible to convince those monitoring the scheduling process to exempt anyone from it. This provoked all sorts of evasive and extra-legal tactics among faculties sufficiently committed to their mission of tailoring educational programs to individuals. In another case, the small-school practice of placing students in volunteer positions in the community for half a day each week—in the dual interests of making the benefits of service learning available to them and of providing time for teachers to work together while the students were out—was can-

celled by a district policy requiring all students to be in classrooms for five full days each week.

Within the districts examined in this Policy Brief, the single practice that is perhaps most inimical to the success of small schools and schools-within-schools is what is usually a teachers' union contract provision: the right of teachers to fill openings based on their seniority within the system. Small schools and schools-within-schools are typically based on a like-minded faculty, and often one that has undergone a particular sort of professional development together. When new teachers are brought in who know nothing of the theme or focus of the program and who, in fact, may be quite indifferent or even unsympathetic to it, not only is the program's effectiveness undermined, but its faculty's morale may suffer. Uninformed or hostile newcomers have been known to destroy programs. In acknowledgement of this, New York City's United Federation of Teachers agreed to an arrangement that is now a regular provision within the contract: when 75 percent of a school's or school-within-a-school's teachers agree, seniority transfer rights are suspended, and instead, a personnel committee, which includes teachers, selects new hires. Recently, the percent of agreement necessary was reduced to 50.

Policy challenges facing schools-within-schools. In the case of schools-within-schools, the most immediate policy environment is typically created by the building principal. The first major policy difficulty with this arrangement stems from instability—if the principal leaves, support may collapse if he or she is replaced by someone less supportive or hostile to the school-within-a-school arrangement.

The second major policy difficulty faced by schools-within-schools stems from control issues. Principals are accustomed to being the center of authority, decision making, and monitoring within their schools. The school-within-a-school structure challenges such centralized control. It invites diversity, rendering control and oversight of the resulting differentiated units more difficult and awkward to sustain. Ideally, the principal sets a vision for academic achievement for all students and encourages individual schools within the school to establish clear, if different, roadmaps toward the vision. In the playing out of daily school life, however, maintaining focus on this vision can prove difficult. Some schools, for instance, have had difficulty over matters such as one behavior and discipline code versus several; one graduation ceremony versus several; and which takes precedence, the demands of orchestra and athletic teams or the school-within-a-school's schedule.

In high schools, there is often a third major source of policy-related difficulty that stems from the role and prerogatives of department chairs. The school-within-a-school structure is not simply a departure from or modification of the traditional high school structure, which is horizontally divided into subject areas. Schools-within-schools recommend a vertical structure instead, organizing teachers of diverse subjects and grade levels into a unit. Thus, in those high schools that add schools-within-schools while retaining department chairs and their prerogatives, an ongoing tension should be expected between the "old order" and the new. When department chairs call meetings, for example, they can create conflicts with teachers' obligations to and within the new units. The challenge exists in somewhat weaker form in larger elementary schools, where the school-within-a-school organization replaces the grade-level organization that is sometimes prominent and powerful. Grade-level organization, however, is rarely as strong at the elementary level as departmental organization is in the high school.

Messages to Policymakers

Examination of the policy environments of urban schools in six cities reconfirms an often-made observation: successful, enduring change and reform in schools requires change and reform at the system level. This, in turn, means that there must be changes in the rules that govern schools

and in the systems that manage them. The following suggestions address system-imposed difficulties that policymakers can address to improve the policy environments of small urban schools and schools-within-schools.

1. **Standardize policies that accommodate and support small schools and schools-within-schools.** In the school systems described in this Policy Brief (see pp. 6-7), there was not much evidence of a comprehensive, inclusive approach to policymaking at the district level. Instead, there were attempts to accommodate new and very different sorts of organizational units by granting waivers and exemptions. Districts should consider documenting exemptions carefully during an innovation's start-up process and reviewing exemptions periodically to create standard policy as small schools become "regularized" in the district. The following are specific examples of ways policies can support these innovations.

   a. **Install actively supportive leaders and structures.** It appears that for a major reform to succeed, more than the mere approval of the person at the top is required. Without this person's active and enthusiastic support, it is hard to properly implement and sustain a major reform such as school downsizing. It helps to have an office highly placed within the administrative structure that is charged solely with nurturing, sustaining, and advocating for the change. Placing such responsibility in the hands of an assistant to a high official will not suffice. It must be a line office with responsibility for the oversight of the new schools.

   Without such an arrangement, schools may be constrained by complex layers of bureaucracy. In New York City, for example, some of the small schools opened in the 1990s sought affiliation with the Office of Alternative Schools, but many were simply assigned to the High Schools Division. These schools had to serve two masters—the district superintendent and the borough superintendent representing the High Schools Division. With two different sets of expectations, two different cultures, and two different sets of regulations and procedures, progress was difficult.

   Related to installing supportive leaders is the need to safeguard fledgling reforms against administrative turnover. The frequency of turnover among city superintendents—the average term is now 4.6 years in the nation's largest cities—makes it counter to teachers' self-preservation to invest the energy and effort major change requires in any particular superintendent's reform venture.[8]

   To address this barrier to school improvement and reform, school districts might well offer teachers who invest time and effort in major reform efforts some sort of guarantee—perhaps in the form of a compact, if not a contract—that the reform venture will endure for a reasonable **minimum** period, or that they will have a voice in its discontinuance. This would restrict the authority of new administrations (be it a superintendent or, within a school, a principal) to wipe the slate clean. And while it is conceivable that in some instances this would be unfortunate, an up-front guarantee of some sort may be the only way to keep teachers from becoming so "reform-weary" that they become reluctant or unwilling to cooperate in school improvement efforts.

   b. **Negotiate differently with unions to ensure staffing decisions are made to benefit the goals and structure of the school.** Standard teachers union contracts often do not allow for alternative staffing procedures. By including unions in the planning phases of small school and school-within-a-school development, special arrangements can be reached to assure the continuity of staffing and the support of the union for the desired innovations.

Six Approaches to Downsizing Schools

New York City: Assignment of oversight to a separate, high-ranking district office. Perhaps the oldest model is that of the large district creating a separate office with exclusive responsibility for the new units. This was the solution adopted in New York City in 1983 by then-chancellor Tony Alvarado. The chancellor was seeking a way to encourage secondary school innovation, despite the policies of the city's High Schools Division—notoriously the educational bureaucracy's most rigid and intransigent office. Instead of trying to change the division, Alvarado created a new superintendency of alternative schools to launch innovative schools, represent them within the system, and oversee them with much more flexibility. The new office stood in the city's table of organization as the equal of the five borough high school superintendents, the only difference being that each borough superintendent controlled a contiguous area and the Office of Alternative Schools had schools and programs scattered throughout the five boroughs.

The crux of this model is that self-selecting groups of teachers are invited to launch small schools or schools-within-schools, and a high-ranking school official—the superintendent, or an associate superintendent—then directly oversees these units instead of having them report to principals or middle level central office managers. Unless the overseer is the superintendent, oversight of the new units is the sole function of the officer to whom they are assigned.

Philadelphia: Districtwide mandate limiting school size. Between 1994 and 2000, school downsizing was the centerpiece of then-superintendent David Hornbeck's program. Instead of turning to organizational structure to bring about downsizing, he used policy. He launched *small learning communities* with the mandate that no unit in Philadelphia schools could exceed 400 students. Any school with an enrollment larger than 400 would have to break itself down into separate and distinct units. The units were then overseen by their building principals, who were responsible for carrying out the superintendent's mandate: downsize; create a distinctive theme for each unit; and, eventually, give students or families a choice among units.

Such an approach has both liabilities and assets. The strong point, of course, is the possibility of improving all schools from the start of the mandate. The weakness is that a mandated effort—and one of such scale—is likely to succeed slowly, if at all. Hornbeck, however, had clear and plausible plans for helping schools move from shaky starts to successful development.

Boston: Establishment of Pilot Schools. Boston's well-known Pilot Schools (originally, there were 11; there are now 13) were intended from the start as innovative departures to be given broad freedom. Interestingly, the arrangement was initially proposed by the Boston Teachers Union. The union recommended the launching of "pilot" schools to serve two purposes: (1) to demonstrate the establishment's (i.e., the school system's and union's) ability to be creative and to permit innovation, and (2) to provide an alternative to the charter schools being launched in Boston and elsewhere in Massachusetts. Both

For instance, when New York City's Office of Alternative Schools worked with the state education department to secure a waiver for the usual certification requirements for teachers (allowing talented but "out of license" teachers to teach in schools that were not large enough to support full programs for teachers of single disciplines), it carefully coordinated its actions with city officials and the teachers union. As a result, the Office secured the union's agreement that the schools' needs, and not teachers' seniority, should determine who was hired in these small schools.

2. **Help schools base restructuring efforts on research.** The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* underscores the importance of basing all education decisions on the best available research. Schools applying for grants (e.g., comprehensive school reform) should not be the only ones who must convincingly connect their plans to research findings indicating that a chosen approach is likely to succeed. As schools and districts consider downsizing and other options for improving student achievement, they may need support in reviewing existing research and adapting a model or strategy that has yielded positive results in schools with demographics similar to their own. The availability of expert guidance in identifying and applying relevant research within state and local contexts is essential.[7]

Six Approaches to Downsizing Schools *(continued)*

the union that proposed them, and the superintendent who supported the idea, hoped that the schools would become sources of ideas and inspiration throughout the city. There is a coordinator of Pilot Schools in the central office, but he has not functioned as a strong advocate.

In a number of ways, the Pilots appear to be thriving, though many feel their independence from the system continues to be a constant struggle. Some in the central office grouse that what these schools are doing is not being shared. (The schools' position is that they are wiling to share but that the district is responsible for organizing occasions for doing so.)

Chicago: Distributed support. In Chicago, small schools have been formally blessed and encouraged by the school board but, until recently, have had no strong champion at central headquarters. The district's table of organization designated the assistant to the associate superintendent for instruction as their liaison. This title was later changed to director of the Office of Special Initiatives, and the director oversaw small schools as well as an array of special projects. But the director was assigned no staff or budget. And while the authority and voice of small schools within the system has been notably weaker in Chicago than in the three cities described earlier, this has been offset somewhat by an unusually strong alliance with the business and professional, philanthropic, and academic communities. Recently, the staff counsel of one of the key organizations, the Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, became director of the system's new Office of Small Schools, an office supported by the present CEO of Chicago's schools.

Kauai, Hawaii: Principal-instigated downsizing. Yet another pattern consists of schools-within-schools created at the individual school level, rather than at the district level, and at the instigation of the principal. The Kapaa Elementary School on Hawaii's island of Kauai represents this model. There, a new principal of an elementary school enrolling 1,500 students sought to reduce the oversized school to more humane dimensions by inviting and encouraging self-selecting groups of teachers to design their own separate school-within-a-school. None were ordered to do so, but over a four- or five-year period, and with the proffering of incentives, the school was gradually converted into eight schools-within-schools, each with its own teacher leader. Kauai's schools-within-schools were afforded particularly strong support within the school but very little support from the system outside it.

Portland, Oregon: Grassroots-initiated downsizing. Probably the most prevalent model, until quite recently, is the grassroots model in which a group of teachers, or a group of parents and teachers, decides to try to launch a school-within-a-school, and seeks the principal's authorization for doing so. Each arrangement and prerogative must then be negotiated with the principal. Of the six patterns described here, this probably represents the weakest and most unstable, since the unit exists at the pleasure of the principal. Any change in that office can terminate it. This is the position of the six schools-within-schools, called *focus schools*, in Portland, Oregon. They are currently seeking a firmer and more favorable footing within that district. (10)

3. **Respond proactively to new demands for school accountability.** A hallmark of small schools and schools-within-schools is their ability to personalize the curriculum and its delivery to better meet students' needs. The standards movement and new demands for school accountability require schools to see that students acquire important concepts and common understandings, as well as intellectual skills and abilities. Small schools and schools-within-schools need to proactively create an approach that balances personalization of curriculum and the teaching of widely accepted standards. This does not mean that schools cannot adapt a nontraditional curriculum, or present a traditional curriculum in nontraditional ways. It does mean, however, that schools and districts need to let the goal of improving student achievement inform decisions about downsizing schools and adopting curricula.

A school's response to demands for accountability will depend, in part, on the nature of the tests required by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. This legislation requires annual testing in grades 3 through 8; however, few, if any, states at this point have selected or designed all of the tests they will use. If the tests emphasize intellectual skills (e.g., analysis, inference drawing, separating fact from interpretation, and judgment), then students dealing with nontraditional curriculum—or traditional curriculum in

nontraditional ways—should have no more difficulty than students from conventional schools.

By way of example, consider the success of International High School in Queens, New York, which serves mostly high-poverty students from other countries who arrive in the United States with little or no command of English. The school's faculty developed comprehensive systems of performance assessment for their students, lengthened class time, and increased interdisciplinary work. The result? International's dropout rate has been as low as 1 percent and its college attendance rate as high as 96 percent; its students have met with surprising success in taking the standardized New York State Regents Exams (which all students were required to pass, beginning in 2000).

4. **Rethink the principalship.** An examination of the issues outlined in this Policy Brief points to the penultimate conclusion that perhaps it is time to reexamine current ideas about the principalship. Considerable reform literature, especially that emanating from the Effective Schools movement, has sought to strengthen the principalship (i.e., expand the principal's role, authority, and control). This has been done to such an extent that there are now cries that we are expecting and demanding too much of principals, and that we have stretched their responsibilities too far. As one recent study pointed out, particularly in poorly performing schools, "the heroic model of urban principalship has run its course and may even be dysfunctional." Among principals themselves, there are complaints that new responsibilities have been added while control has been diminished, for example, by school advisory councils, shared decision-making requirements, or by a reduction in curricular choices resulting from the standards movement. Principals, nevertheless, retain what amounts in many places to dictatorial powers with respect to teachers. And they are very much concerned with power and control. A recent study of what administrative interns are taught by their mentors revealed the extent to which such professional preparation emphasizes the centrality of control and status awareness to fledgling school administrators.[11]

   The ability to participate successfully in shared governance arrangements can be especially vital to the success of schools-within-schools. The principal of Kapaa Elementary School (Hawaii), for example, divided duties among himself and his two vice principals in such a fashion that he was running the schools-within-a-school and the vice principals were handling most of the necessary maintenance/management functions. Here, the principal remained clearly the leader, protector, and advocate of the innovation. In contrast, there is no schoolwide principal in the Julia Richman Education Complex (New York City). Rather a building manager works in easy collaboration with the small schools' leaders, supervising the maintenance and security staffs, scheduling common spaces, and coordinating relationships with the community and outside agencies. A key to his success, according to colleagues, is the building manager's nonauthoritarian stance and his view of himself as a supporter, facilitator, and peer.

5. **Provide opportunities for professional development and collaboration.** According to a recent report on small learning communities, "New models of professional development are

School Size Index

number of public schools in 1929-30: 247,000
number of public schools in 1999-2000: 92,012

average school size in all U.S. school districts: 504
average school size in 100 largest U.S. school districts: 707.7

percentage of students enrolled in public schools of 1,000 or more: 27.7
percentage of students enrolled in schools of fewer than 500: 18

Source: NCES Common Core of Data, 2002

Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by type and size of school: 1999-2000

Enrollment size of school	Enrollment, by type of school[1]					
	Total[2]	Elementary[3]	Secondary[4]		Combined elementary/ secondary[5]	Other[2]
			All schools	Regular schools[6]		
1	8	9	10	11	12	13
Total	46,689,373	30,460,283	15,111,648	14,644,266	1,051,609	65,833
Percent[7]	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Under 100	0.91	0.64	1.00	0.62	6.26	20.97
100 to 199	2.74	2.77	2.22	1.84	8.64	15.31
200 to 299	5.44	6.58	2.89	2.64	8.17	17.23
300 to 399	8.90	11.40	3.81	3.65	8.96	16.08
400 to 499	11.36	15.01	4.20	4.12	8.52	8.67
500 to 599	11.79	15.29	4.96	4.94	9.08	4.05
600 to 699	10.48	13.17	5.16	5.13	9.33	4.01
700 to 799	8.66	10.35	5.52	5.53	5.65	0.00
800 to 999	12.00	12.67	10.73	10.85	11.12	5.28
1,000 to 1,499	13.83	9.85	22.10	22.46	11.29	2.10
1,500 to 1,999	6.78	1.78	17.5	17.41	4.39	2.96
2,000 to 2,999	5.45	0.43	15.70	16.09	3.72	3.36
3,000 or more	1.66	0.07	4.65	4.72	4.87	0.00
Average enrollment[7]	521	477	706	785	282	123

[1]These enrollment data should be regarded as approximations only. Totals differ from those reported in other tables because this table represents data reported by schools rather than by states or school districts. Percent distribution and average enrollment calculations exclude data for schools not reporting enrollment.

[2]Includes special education, alternative, and other schools not classified by grade span.

[3]Includes schools beginning with grade 6 or below and with no grade higher than 8.

[4]Includes schools with no grade lower than 7.

[5]Includes schools beginning with grade 6 or below and ending with grade 9 or above.

[6]Excludes special education schools, vocational schools, and alternative schools.

[7]Data are for schools reporting their enrollment size.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data survey, Table 96, October 2001.

needed—models in which teachers take an active role in their own growth and experience opportunities that are coherent, long range, and closely linked to immediate classroom contexts, school goals, and real curricula." Smallness invites collaboration among teachers and meaningful conversations about how to improve teaching and learning. Scheduling that allows for common planning time and team teaching fosters the development of a professional learning community within the school, which can lead to changes in curricular organization, instructional strategies, the organization of teachers' work, and school and student assessment.[12]

In Boston's Pilot Schools, which have a great deal of curricular and scheduling autonomy, dual teaching arrangements are common. Their autonomy not only permits the flexibility to change the schedule during the year—but also to build in a great deal of professional development time for collaborative teacher meetings. One Pilot has built in weekly three-hour meetings of the full faculty, weekly two-hour meetings of the staffs of the two school houses, one weekend retreat during the school year, five days at the end of the school year, and ten days at the beginning of the year.

Conclusion

To a policymaker or school leader who has guided change in an educational setting, many of the recommendations made in this Policy Brief will be familiar. The successful implementation of any major educational change entails some of the same basic principles: bringing stakeholders to the table early; making sure there is commitment from senior administration for the program; documenting successes, challenges, and failures along the way to assist in creating cohesive policy for the future; and assuring that educators and school leaders are supported with the professional development, authority to make decisions, and collaborative environments they need to see the change through to ongoing success.

In addition to these universal recommendations for effective change, other specific issues affect the success of small schools and schools-within-schools. These include working with teachers unions; considering the creation of one or more administrative leadership positions for this type of school at the most senior district level; and assuring the school vision and curriculum are based on research and state and national standards.

As the research continues to mount as to the success of small schools and schools-within-schools to increase student achievement and the likelihood that students will graduate and go on to higher education, the policy environment will, no doubt, expand to enable these institutions to flourish. The next few years are likely to prove important to this endeavor.

Notes

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For Further Reading

The issues presented in this Policy Brief are discussed in greater detail in *Not So Easy Going: The Policy Environments of Small Urban Schools and Schools-within-Schools* (2003, 108 pp., soft cover, $13, ISBN 1-880785-26-9), authored by Mary Anne Raywid and Gil Schmerler and published by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools at AEL (call 800-624-9120 to order).

Mary Anne Raywid is a "retired" professor of educational administration and policy studies from Hofstra University. She has specialized in educational reform and restructuring in the several roles of researcher, teacher, consultant, evaluator, and writer. Her long-time (25-year) interest in alternative schools led her to welcome the small schools movement as the brightest light on the educational horizon.

Gil Schmerler is chair of the Department of Educational Leadership at Bank Street College in New York City. He formerly directed an alternative high school in Teaneck, New Jersey, and helped create new small schools in Rhode Island and New York. He was a coordinator for the Bank Street/Chicago Small Schools Study. Central to all his work have been personalization and democratic decision making.

AEL
PO Box 1348
Charleston, WV
25325-1348

Address Correction Requested

Telephone:
304-347-0400
800-624-9120
Fax: 304-347-0487
aelinfo@ael.org
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